

THINK VICTORY!

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Thinking is the A B C of life. Until a child thinks he has no real existence. He is a dear and precious toy. Once he thinks for himself a new force is about the house at once, and everything in that house is modified. What a man thinks, both Buddha and Christ declared unexpressingly, is the important thing, and a host of writers to-day are rubbing it in—that what he thinks he is. The thinker is the real and living part of us. The act is merely the thought carried out, but no act that has not first been vividly thought has stuff and impetus in it. It is all so simple, so commonplace, so scientific. There was a man who was never tired of shouting it—Thoughts are Things. And it is literally true. The house, the bridge, the attack are vividly thought before they exist. Put the clapper on a thought and it will never materialise. It stops dead. But keep on thinking the thought, and whether through you or through another it is bound to result in action before long.

Two men, let us assume, wake together in the same room, see the same objects, leave the house and go along the street, work in the same office, meet the same people together during the day. From the first moment to the last they share the same perceptions. Their reactions to what they perceive, however, differ absolutely. One thinks blackly, without hope or courage, and leaves a smudge of his gloomy atmosphere on everything and everyone; the other thinks hope and courage and confidence, communicating these qualities willy-nilly all about him. Had we the power to see the actual trails the couple left we might see a trail of light and a trail of darkness, but neither of them will—both trails moving, spreading, colouring all they touch. One man, though he may have done no definite "war-work" during the entire day, has helped his country, while the other has hindered it, though he may have been engaged in filling shells. "What do you think about the situation?" is the daily, hourly question now. "What do you think about it?" is the vital one. Thought is prayer. And the prayer of a decent man . . . that's it in a nutshell. Every man, moreover, can compel himself to think power and pluck and persistence. The Stock Exchange is theory, we read one day. Why? Because stocks are firm or going up. Why? Because news is better. Why is it better? Because someone, someone far away from the City, thought out vividly a certain plan, a certain attack. The cheerful courage of the stock brokers is due to that strong, active, confident thought that matured several days before in the mind of one man or action or in the collective mind of his staff about him.

To think with belief is faith. Genuine faith we know can move mountains; it can certainly move guns, can move our energies, our hearts, our wills. Some day, when the world is more awake, we may have in the Government a man to organise the nation's thinking. A First Lord of Thinking will make us set aside a certain hour in the day, when 40 million minds will think with concentration upon a given desired end. Thought-power will be mobilised. The secret of the contemplative orders will become a universal practice. There are the French nuns, we know, who pray without ceasing, day and night, for the unfortunate women of the world. There are no tabulated results, but that steady stream of vital thinking that issues from their quiet chapel must be effective somewhere, somewhere. Germany thought war so vividly for years that nothing could prevent its materialising into acts. In Italy the thinking of the nation as a whole swept her from her feet, in spite of all obstacles. Had we Ca. lost, whether of three or of 23, who thought with undivided concentration one clear single command, that thought would permeate us as a tablet, and we should think the same. The reason the masses have confidence in one man at the War Office is because they know and feel that he thinks with a superb, undeflected, splendid concentration of energy, which results inevitably in vital action. They remember that years ago he thought a railway across the desert sands, and that railway materialised. If the thinking of the nation could be unified again to-day, as it was certainly unified in August, 1914, the power of Britain would witness that internationalism we all desire but know not how to compass. Criticism there would always be—it bears testimony to our life, our freedom—but there would be no whimpers.

"I would like to start Thought Sheds in the main street of every town in England," exclaimed a woman the other day. "I would fill them with the Men in the Street, and he half an hour in the day persuade them to all still and think courage, enthusiasm, Victory." Everybody laughed, the world is not at that stage yet; she said, however, a big, real, necessary thing. For thinking and being are one thing, and the word "man" comes from the Sanskrit root of the verb "to think." Thought assuredly is dynamic—with every genuine thought a degree of actual nervous energy is engendered in the brain, and thence distributed. Thought affects matter, unifies, moulds it. It is creative, "permanently creative, in the sense of bringing into existence things which without it would not have been—things which are new to the universe—and matter is the vehicle in which the thought is incarnate and made manifest." We have heard this before, of course, just as we have heard that the universe is possibly a Thought of the Deity materialised. . . . If this immense reservoir of National thought could be mobilised, concentrated, organised, it would provide an engine of enormous power. It would steady millions. Nothing could stand against it. It would result in acts.

And there is only one thing necessary to think—Victory. Think all day long that Right is on our side, and that Right must conquer. There would be no room then for lesser thoughts. It is useless to think slaughter, destruction, death, and to think hate or revenge has merely a disintegrating effect that weakens energy by dissipating it. We know the Germans believe an inhuman spirit is efficacious; there is no need to think it. Such a thought is not constructive, but destructive—reacts upon the thinker, causing waste of energy. It is, on the lowest ground, ineffective merely. Why do not the churches of every denomination proclaim a definite hour of a definite day, once a week perhaps, when every man and woman who can spare the time shall enter, sit down, concentrate the mind with all the intensity possible, and think courage, confidence, endurance, and willing sacrifice—Victory, in a word? The collective result would be enormous. It is not enough to inspire a Deity to do this for us; we should do it each one for himself. After half an hour of each effort, honestly, vividly made, no individual would leave the building quite the same as when he entered it. Each one would be a centre of distribution of the steadying power now so urgently needed everywhere. The proposition sounds so wild and fantastic. It is so practical and scientific. Every drifting Tommy is weakened essentially when he knows that at home our thoughts are scattered, that some are thinking increased pay and strikes and gloomy pessimism—division in place of unity. Victory, of course, will come. But it will come more quickly if everybody in the Empire thinks it with intense, unalterable conviction.

The poem, the book, the marble that moves the world existed first as a thought in an individual heart:

"With wonderful dashless dimes
We build up the world's great edifice,
And out of a fabulous story
We fashion an empire's glory:
One man with a dream, at pleasure,
Shall go forth and conquer a crown;
And those with a song's new measure
Can trample an empire down.

"We, in the ages bring
In the buried past of the earth,
Built Nineveh with our sighing,
And Babel itself with our mirth;
And o'ertrew them with prophesying
To the old of the new world's worth;
For each age is a dream that is dying,
Or one that is coming to birth."